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ABSTRACT

Professional development schools (PDSs) are usually viewed as school-university partnerships aimed at regeneration of teacher education and/or the reform of public schools in general. This paper examines the gap between creating a PDS structure and achieving these goals, suggesting that bridging the gap may require destabilization of both faculty identity and faculty work environments. A program of personnel preparation at the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, combined faculty members from differing backgrounds at a single campus, thus introducing the need for a new form of collaboration. While historically the School of Education faculty divided itself by specialized fields, adjustments had to be made as a result of the PDS's focus on real school problems, and faculty participating in the PDS program were encouraged to think of themselves as part of interdisciplinary teams in order to relate to the public schools' problems in a more meaningful way. PDSs also lead to destabilization of the work environment by creating faculty obligations to both the university and the participating public school sites. Faculty disorientation in this regard has less to do with the logistical difficulties of a dualistic workplace, but rather involves tensions between the academic duties they face as School of Education faculty and their increased time away from the university setting. (MAB)

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"Professional Development Schools and the Destabilization of Faculty Work"

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Foster the Common Good:
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Diverse Understandings of Collaboration
Through a Year in Professional Development Schools"

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Professional development schools are usually viewed as school and university partnerships aimed at achieving particular purposes, typically the regeneration of teacher education (and other personnel preparation) and/or the reform of the public schools. These purposes are themselves justified in terms of a presumably even more basic goal: improved learning by children. Better teachers and better schools are believed to be important primarily because they enhance student outcomes. This logic is compelling and is rarely questioned; who can be against increased student achievement?

Yet, the leap between creating a professional development school structure and achieving improved learning for public school students is a huge one, defying easy evaluation and omitting critically important intermediate processes and purposes. I am going to look at two intermediate processes often stimulated by professional development school work -- the destabilization of both faculty identity and faculty work environments -- which I think are vitally important steps toward creating a broadened community of learning in a School of Education (SOE). Without a SOE community of learning which cuts across narrow specializations, the regeneration of personnel preparation programs borders on the impossible, and SOE faculty cannot provide meaningful support for school reform. In this paper, I give limited attention to how professional development school structures affect public school personnel, though these intermediate processes are as important for these personnel as for university faculty.

To make my theoretical arguments more concrete, I illustrate them with examples from our personnel preparation programming in the SOE at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), as well as from our professional development school efforts

at school sites. Our work at UNC-CH is more-or-less typical of the partnership movement nationally except that we give more attention to school reform than the typical professional development school effort.

While this paper is individually written, I could not have prepared it independent of a series of pre-conference dialogues among our twelve symposium participants. Libby Vesilind (proposal author), Susana Flores, John Galassi, Gretchen Givens (email participation only), Suzanne Gulledge, Mike Hale, Marcia Huth, Marilyn Johnston (email participation only), Cindee Lundeen, Dorothy Mebane, Dwight Rogers, and I first gathered on November 7 shortly after learning that our proposal had been accepted by Division K. We started a conversation which extended over four additional two-hour meetings, about at one-month intervals. Recounting elements of these discussions is an important prelude to my discussion of destabilization of faculty identity and work environments.

Our Symposium: An Issue of Organization or of Conceptualization?

Our group story begins when we first met on November 7, 1997 to discuss how we were going to present the symposium. Initially, we viewed the purpose of our meetings primarily in organizational terms. How were we to present a meaningful and coherent symposium on our Research Triangle Professional Development Schools Partnership (RTPDSP) when we had twelve different participants, even if two of them (Marilyn Johnston and Marcia Huth) were to be critics?

At our initial meeting, destabilization (which I had discussed in my part of the symposium proposal) and reconstruction toward community (from Marcia's part of the proposal) became major topics of discussion. One key question was whether our RTPDSP

work represented some "higher good" which might form the basis for a community of interest among all of us who worked in the this structure. In our first discussion, we rambled across diverse topics: the new expectations of us in professional development school work, the tendency for school problems to require an interdisciplinary approach while we operated from disciplinary perspectives, the absence from our panel of the voices of public school teachers and students, and the tendency for ways of knowing in the schools to differ from university ways of knowing (my field notes, November 7, 1997). We left our first meeting without a clear direction for how to organize the symposium, but with the sense that a number of interesting conceptual and practical issues had been identified.

Destabilization and Community

In preparation for the December 5 meeting, I wrote a short paper titled "PDSs and the Destabilization of Faculty Identity and Work" and read the paper to the group at the beginning of the meeting. Marcia described a model for community formation: forming, storming, norming, and performing, and she argued that both destabilization and the ability to be adaptable are important. That idea prompted Libby in a subsequent email (December 26, 1997) to say: "I've been thinking a lot about that, Marcia! Does that mean that a PDS community might exist just for the purpose of destabilizing existing structures, with no particular model community as a goal? The goal is to continue to reconstruct forever and ever? Is that the REAL reason our PDS was begun?? From one year in PDS I've FELT much destabilization and even some fear of destabilization. This may sound paradoxical, but I think it takes a lot of a certain kind of university infrastructure to support productive destabilization." Clarke

(1997) refers to this tension as the need for balancing order and energy.

Near the end of our December 5 meeting, we reviewed the original goals of our RTPDSP: to renew and restructure the public school curriculum; to renew and improve professional preparation programs; to establish continuing professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, administrators, and teacher and other education trainers; and to conduct an organized program of school-based research designed to improve practice. "So where," Libby later observed, "is community in our objectives? Can the PDS objectives be accomplished without new kinds of communities?? Collaboration was assumed as part of PDS (in the original vision) but now we seem to be exploring how to form productive communities out of collaboration" (Libby's email, December 26, 1997).

"This reminds me," continued Libby, "of Suzanne's point -- that some of us learned that collaboration is not just working together and then separating and going back to an unchanged 'home base.' Collaboration is not simply adding together ideas from school and from university. And Mike talked about a group of teachers who spent much of their collaboration trying to figure out how to be a group, how to collaborate. In my own experience, even the language had to be negotiated, especially the question-posing at the beginning of our collaborative inquiry and then, later, the concepts I tried to introduce from descriptive statistics. So community building becomes a goal in itself." Yet our RTPDSP objectives did not acknowledge community as an objective related to enhancing learning opportunities for all children (the overarching and ultimate goal toward which our objectives are aimed).

Our initial attempts to organize the symposium had evolved in directions none of us could have anticipated. Instead of merely dividing up the turf of presentation time, we started a series of searching discussions about the ways in which our professional development school work had been disorienting -- destabilizing, in our terminology -- to each of us. We felt the need for some new form of community, something more substantial than the collaboration envisioned by the RTPDSP structure. Yet, community was not even an espoused goal of our RTPDSP, and some members of our group doubted that community was even pertinent to our professional development school work. I must admit that this search for community went far beyond my initial interest in the destabilizing potential of our RTPDSP structure.

Keeping in mind our desire for community, I turn now to my contribution to the symposium: the destabilizing impact of working in professional development schools on faculty identity and work environments. My contribution is a story of both joy and sorrow. I believe that the modern school of education is an anachronism, an entity which lacks a central commitment to the professional preparation of school personnel and tends to distances itself from the public schools (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Tom, 1997). As a result, I welcome the destabilizing potential of professional development schools. Yet, the promise of such a structure is not nearly so clear that we can welcome standards which attempt to prescribe what constitutes good professional development schools (NCATE, 1997).

Much remains to be learned about how professional development schools can foster the regeneration of both schools and schools of education. I think community is an important element of that regeneration, but among us, as you will hear, are

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quite varied views on the nature of community and even on whether a community of interest is possible in a professional development school structure which spans school and university. Let me turn now to the destabilizing potential of this type of partnership structure.

Destabilizing faculty identity.

When I arrived at UNC-CH six years ago, I was struck by the high degree of insulation among sub-units of the School of Education. Even though our SOE is not departmentalized and is relatively small (around 50 tenure lines), faculty members often collaborated and socialized with only a few others in the building, typically those who participated with them in one of the six Ph.D. programs: Educational Psychology, School Psychology, Social Foundations, Literacy/Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction, and Administrative Theory and Organization. I remember one person saying the SOE was best understood as a cottage industry approach to programming.

Only a few faculty had identities broader than the content parameters of the six doctoral programs. The range of a person's identity was rather easily measured by how that person introduced himself/herself in public, e.g., when an orientation meeting was held in Peabody Hall for newly admitted students. A common form of introduction was: "I am a literacy professor" or "I'm in C and I with an interest in math education" or "I am an educational psychologist." A few might say, more broadly, "I am in elementary education." In only one undergraduate program -- the middle school program -- did faculty members consistently identify with it as a totality.

Interestingly, that program had been planned from scratch about five years earlier by a small group of faculty who from the

beginning thought of this program more as an entity than as a series of specialized courses. In the last few years, there are more SOE faculty members who are beginning to view themselves in cross-disciplinary terms, especially with the rethinking of the elementary program and the conversion of the secondary program from a course-based undergraduate model to an integrated fifth-year approach. I believe that the regeneration of these two programs has given the faculty who work in them a broadened sense of identity, more like what seems to be the norm for the middle school program.

One other interesting aspect of the middle school program is that this effort represented an attempt by the SOE to catch up with developments in the public schools, as the switch started in the 1980s from junior high to middle school organization. At that time, the state of North Carolina was also changing its approach to teacher certification by introducing the middle school certificate. So, as Libby suggested, there may be a parallel between how external events drove the development of the middle school program and how the RTPDSP appears to be altering the SOE; in both cases, there is an outside-to-inside movement, if the SOE is seen as the "inside." Moreover, since the middle school movement stresses interdisciplinary teams and the teaching certificate is for two subject areas, faculty members in the new program were pressured to stop thinking of themselves solely as science educators or social studies educators. Instead, faculty members were encouraged to conceive of themselves as an interdisciplinary group in order to overtake reforms occurring outside the SOE.

When we first starting discussing a professional development school approach several years ago, I surmised that this structure

might further erode the highly specialized identities still possessed by many faculty members within our SOE. As our RTPDSP effort unfolded, we selected five sites in the spring of 1996. Four of these sites represented a level of schooling -- two elementary (Forest View and Grady Brown), one middle (McDougle), and one high school (Orange). The selection of entire schools as sites probably challenged those whose identities are tied primarily to some specialized subject matter such as social foundations, special education, or reading. At the same time, the use of schools as sites did not encourage faculty members to broaden their identities beyond the parameters of an individual program since our teacher education programming corresponds to levels of schooling.

In terms of faculty identity, however, the most interesting developments are occurring at the one RTPDSP site which is not a school: the Chatham County at-risk program. The focus for this "site" is on better coordinating and integrating the district's work with children identified as being at-risk. SOE faculty members from counseling, school psychology, and educational leadership have become involved in this district-wide RTPDSP setting. An unanticipated benefit of mixing faculty members with differing forms of expertise is a new form of faculty collaboration. For example, as faculty members from counseling and school psychology involved their graduate interns at the Chatham site, these faculty members needed to start talking and working together in order to coordinate the efforts of their students. This year, moreover, students from social work are also involved in Chatham so the basis for collaboration among faculty members from formerly isolated programs is being further expanded. How this new network of relationships will affect faculty identity

is unclear, but preliminary evidence indicates that a broadened sense of interests is developing among SOE faculty who possess differing forms of expertise.

The press for a broadened sense of faculty identity also developed in at least one of the other RTPDSP sites: McDougle Middle School. At that school, the approach during the first year (1996-97) focused on teacher study groups, with most of the topics being proposed by teachers. Typical study group topics were: alternative and authentic assessment, resiliency and the mentoring of students, Paideia seminars, foreign language instruction and technology, and community of learners as related to an advisory program and to new discipline approaches. Implicit in the foci for these study groups and confirmed by our first year of experience with the groups is an appreciation that school problems routinely require an interdisciplinary approach. However, historically our SOE faculty has divided itself up in Peabody Hall by areas of specialized knowledge, not in a way which facilitated drawing upon the varied forms of knowledge pertinent to real school problems.

In many ways, a high degree of specialization is also present in the level of schooling which is least specialized: the elementary school. There the "specialist" teachers -- the music teacher, the art teacher, the PE teacher, and so forth -- define themselves predominantly in terms of their particular areas of knowledge. At Forest View Elementary, however, the barriers between the subject-matter specialists are being broken down by conversation and by the chance to work together to develop an integrated unit of instruction for use in regular classrooms. While this curriculum project might have emerged in the absence of a professional development school structure, this structure seems

to have assisted their collaboration. The specialists needed substantial time, as well as an outside facilitator, to figure out how to work together in a productive way; they needed almost a year of discussions to agree upon and implement the integrated unit.

Thus, our RTPDSP structure does appear to have the capacity to lead many faculty to reconsider and rethink their identities. Well-established identities as specialists seem capable of being recrafted and expanded, and a broadened sense of identity for every faculty member appears necessary if faculty members are to rethink their personnel preparation programs and relate to the public schools and their problems in a meaningful way.

Destabilizing faculty work environments.

Destabilization of identity is only one dimension of how professional development schools can foster the recreation of schools of education. Not just identity but also work environments can be altered by participation in professional development schools. Professional development schools destabilize faculty work environments in a variety of ways, several of which are obvious. In comparison to the past, other faculty members besides clinically oriented ones suddenly have obligations to school settings. Sometimes this new obligation is relatively simple, for example, teaching a preservice teacher education course in a public school or participating in a professional development school planning meeting at a school site. In such instances, the primary change concerns where the work of SOE faculty members is performed.

However, even the minor change of moving the workplace to the schools may lead faculty members to be disoriented. Established friendship patterns among faculty members are

disrupted since their daily routines take them away from Peabody Hall for increasing amounts of time. In addition, coordination of teacher preparation programming among faculty members becomes more difficult because faculty members see one another much less often than formerly. The coherence provided by place is shattered when SOE faculty members spend significant time in school settings as well as at the university.

Yet faculty members concerned about spending increased time in the schools were not necessarily worried about the coordination difficulties which resulted from having dual workplaces. In the hallways or over coffee, small groups of faculty shared their objections to spending increased time in the schools. Some had structured their careers to spend increasing amounts of time on campus, especially after obtaining tenure. In some cases, faculty members desired to rest a bit after the intense effort needed to win tenure, or perhaps they wanted to pursue scholarly efforts more in tune with the underlying reward structure of the SOE than was school-related work. Yet other faculty members expressed concern -- often publicly -- that resources devoted to professional development school work would come at the expense of the PhD program then in the process of reformulation. Another sub-set of the faculty believed that the university should be an interpreter and possibly a critic of contemporary schooling practices, not the partner of the state in implementing questionable -- even misguided -- educational reforms in our partner schools.

At the same time, little discussion occurred at administrative levels within the School of Education about the way in which work at a RTPDSP site counted as part of faculty workload. Even though the relation of professional development

work to faculty workload was identified as an important issue by SOE administrators, they have been preoccupied for the past three years with the complex tasks of identifying RTPDSP sites and initiating activity at these sites. As we complete the second year of professional development school operation, no policy has yet been formulated on how work at these sites counts as part of regular workload. We have not addressed the ways in which program development and school reform efforts connect to our standard categories of research, teaching, and service. Essentially, professional development work is uncredited overload.

This overload, moreover, can easily become substantial. Those faculty members who have labored in the clinical end of teacher education know that any meaningful preservice involvement in the schools takes significant time, let alone efforts dedicated to the reform of the public schools as well as our preservice programming. Moreover, teacher educators in the United States are largely unconcerned about reforming the public schools (Ducharme, 1993). This low interest in school reform may not be as pronounced in our SOE faculty as elsewhere, but most of our SOE faculty members do not appear to place a high priority on school reform. Faculty indifference to reform, coupled with lack of attention to the issue of faculty workload, may account for the apparent decrease of SOE faculty involvement at several sites in year two as compared to year one. At the February retreat of site coordinators, more than one reference was made about the need to increase university faculty involvement at school sites.

Other ways that professional development school work destabilizes existing work patterns may be more subtle but potentially even more powerful than crediting workload, recognizing the time demands of professional development school

work, and acknowledging faculty ambivalence about school reform. At each of our five RTPDSP sites, particular school reform goals have become salient, and these school reform goals tend to be construed in terms that do not readily mesh with faculty members' areas of specialization. These areas of specialization, as noted when discussing faculty identities, tend to be encapsulated by bodies of content, ranging from educational psychology to the writing process to mathematics.

But the problems of interest to teachers and administrators in the schools are cast in broader terms. At McLougle Middle School, for instance, the faculty study groups revolve around school problems, and Forest View Elementary has a teacher study group focused on the achievement of minority students as well as oral history project and a concern for school-community linkages. The exception to this generalization is Grady Brown Elementary where the focus is exclusively on early literacy; even here, however, a concern of pre-K literacy does not necessarily fit well our literacy faculty's emphasis on elementary schooling.

Thus, SOE faculty members (and graduate students) are put in the position of relating to and working on school problems generated primarily by public school teachers and administrators. These problems do not necessarily fit neatly into areas of faculty specialization, thereby raising issues of faculty identity. Moreover, these problems are often best addressed by a form of inquiry -- basically action research (Hubbard & Power, 1993; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995) -- which is not central to the inquiry traditions within schools of education. In addition, public school personnel are as at least as interested in taking action as they are in conducting the inquiry which might inform that action. SOE faculty members often reverse these priorities, and may not

get beyond inquiry, even when this inquiry is in the form of action research. In these ways, our professional development schools are tending to destabilize the work environment of the SOE faculty members who are part of the these efforts.

At the most basic level, professional development schools change the location where faculty do much of their work, but how this work is to be credited to workload is yet to be resolved and the character of this work is also being redefined. Problem selection is largely taken out of the hands of the university faculty, perhaps because SOE faculty members do not have a vision for reforming the public schools. In addition, the appropriate mode of inquiry for professional development school work is an approach which is a low status form of inquiry within the typical school of education.

Conclusion

I personally welcome the destabilization of faculty identity and work environment which accompanies many professional development school efforts, including our own. The contemporary school of education is a dinosaur. Yet a commitment to collaboration -- a driving process behind our RTPDSP -- seems insufficient to save schools of education, including our own, from extinction.

We believe that one route toward rethinking our School of Education's role and purpose is to create a community of interest -- or communities of interest -- around the programmatic and school reform work growing out of our public school partnership. The feasibility of this route is unclear. Along with other professional development school efforts, we have uncovered some of the practical and theoretical barriers to creating such a community of interest. We hope that our work -- to be explored

through this symposium -- also points to potential ways for moving closer to a new form of community.

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